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ABSTRACT

To determine students' different but equally valid ways of dealing with the composing process, a college instructor developed a questionnaire assessing personality styles. The questionnaire distinguishes between (1) approaches to the writing process, (2) preferences for types of instruction, (3) preferences for types of writing and organizational patterns, and (4) different approaches to the writing task. Information from the questionnaire allows the instructor to tailor the classroom environment and assignments to accommodate these differences and maximize student progress. The information also helps the instructor to devise peer groups composed of students with complementary composing styles. The peer groups meet during class time for prewriting activities, collaborative writing, or writing evaluation. A peer response questionnaire has also been developed to encourage students to use their natural inclinations to review papers by peers with different inclinations. (Copies of the personality style and peer response questionnaires are included.) (HTH)

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Composing Styles as Predicted by Personality Style Testing

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Composing Styles as Predicted by Personality Style Testing

Composing Styles as a Base for Peer Group Organization

Born a Libra, I think I was predestined to spend my life seeking balance in many areas including the classroom where I look for opportunities

to draw from the resources of the students as well as from my own and

to pool the resources of the various students.

For many years this meant tapping into pockets of specialized knowledge and eliciting original ideas. However, recently, I have discovered a new resource to work with and balance in the classroom situation. This resource is composing styles--composing styles as I have observed them in operation and as Jensen and DiTibero have itemized, defined, and related them to the personality styles specified by the Myers-Briggs Types Inventory and reported in the October 1984 issue of College Composition and Communication. By allowing for differing composing styles of students in giving my assignments and by balancing the strengths of one student's composing style with the strengths of another student's composing style in peer groups for both collaborative writing and response to individual writing, I hope to encourage students to use

their natural inclinations and to develop unnatural potential.

To distinguish between students with different but equally valid ways of dealing with the composing process (paraphrase Jensen and DiTiberio, 297), I have designed an instrument based on the Jensen and DiTiberio work.

This questionnaire is composed of 20 questions:

5 to distinguish between approaches to the process which consists of invention, writing, revision

5 to distinguish between preferences for types of instructions and between inclinations toward inclusion of types of content

5 to distinguish between preferences for types of of writing and organizational patterns

5 to distinguish between different approaches to the writing task.

INSERT QUESTIONNAIRE

Since I have students with different approaches to the composing process, I have to allow for them. I have to provide assignments which are open enough to allow some students to be original, but which have suggested

Questionnaire

The following questions are designed to provide insight into your composing style. Answer them carefully and honestly, but don't spend a lot of time on any one. Your first inclination is probably the most accurate answer.

___ 1. Would you rather (A) discuss your ideas with people before writing or (B) start writing by yourself?

___ 2. Do you pause (A) because you can't think of any thing to write or (B) to plan your next strategy?

___ 3. Do you outline (A) after writing or (B) before?

___ 4. When you revise your early drafts, are you more likely to (A) reorganize main points or (B) add details to support main points?

___ 5. When you write, do you like (A) to jump right in or (B) to plan first?

___ 6. Would you rather write about (C) things which you have experienced with your five senses or (D) impressions, hunches, things you may imagine?

___ 7. Would you rather (C) receive detailed step-by-step instructions for a writing assignment or (D) be given an opportunity to be original?

___ 8. Would you rather be given (C) a specified framework for a writing assignment or (D) general instructions from which you can create your own goals?

___ 9. (C) Are you careful about spelling and punctuation when you write or (D) do you wait till later to correct these items.

___ 10. When you revise are you more likely (C) to proof read or (D) to add examples?

___ 11. Would you (E) rather categorize facts and details or would you (F) rather discuss values and interpersonal relationships?

___ 12. Would you rather (E) analyze the plot of a movie or (F) write about yuour personal reaction to it?

___ 13. Would you be more proud of (E) a paper which conveyed a clear message or (F) one which interested its readers?

___ 14. Are your first drafts likely to lack (E) personal examples or (F) clarity and organization?

___ 15. Are you likely to (E) follow an outline or (F) let your thoughts flow when writing?

___ 16. Are you more likely to choose a problem (G) you know you can solve or (H) one which interests you?

___ 17. Are you likely to (G) finish each task you begin or (H) leave a number of tasks unfinished?

___ 18. Are you likely to (G) limit your topic quickly or (H) leave your topic flexible and open to new information?

___ 19. Do you set goals and stop at intervals to analyze and revise them or (H) do you dive right in and try to include everything possible?

___ 20. When revising are you likely to need to (G) expand to clarify or (H) cut out material in order to sharped your focus?

step-by-step instructions for other students and exemplary frameworks and models for still other students.

I also have to allow for a variety of prewriting activities, encouragement and support during the process, and opportunities for and checks during revisions.

During prewriting

I have to allow students opportunity

- to discuss or start writing;
- to plan or free write;
- to outline before or after;
- to set own goals or follow step-by step instructions;
- to work from main points to details or from details to main points;
- to begin with experiences or with impressions;
- to free write until a question and possible solution emerge or to outline a problem, question, and possible solution.

As they write I have to watch for certain problems and to encourage students:

- to encourage students who are inclined to follow their interests, to set goals they can handle;
- to encourage students who start too many tasks to choose and finish one;
- to encourage students who fail to limit topics to

limit them;

to encourage students whose tasks lack flexibility to make them more flexibile.

Then, to give students with different styles opportunities to work together, I have used my instrument to set up peer groups composed of students with complementary composing styles: complementary approaches, complementary interests, and complementary revision needs.

To assure complementary approaches, I have placed

a free writer with a planner;

a reviser with a nonreviser;

a person who limits tasks with one who leaves tasks open;

a person who chooses solvable problems with one who follows an interest wherever it leads;

a person who chooses information discriminately with one who tends to include everything.

To assure complementary interests, I have placed

a person interested in facts with one interested in values and relationships;

a person interested in analysis with one who wants to express reactions;

a person interested in conveying a clear message with one who would rather interest a reader.

To assure complementary revision needs, I have placed

- a person who needs to reorganize main points with one who needs to add details and examples to support main points;
- a person who tends to details during the composing process with one who needs to edit carefully later;
- a person who needs to expand and clarify with one who needs to cut and sharpen focus.

These peer groups meet during class time--sometimes to enter into pre-writing activities, sometimes to write collaboratively, and sometimes to review individually authored writing. This semester they have collaborated on work involved in preparing a research paper.

Prewriting tasks involved

- analyzing scholarly articles for rhetorical strategies;
- finding and describing a problem to be solved by secondary research;
- focusing a question;
- choosing information to be included in a summary and in a synthesis.

Students collaborate when they write paraphrases and when they wrote syntheses.

However, the groups are most active in the revising of individually authored work. And for this activity, I prepared questionnaires which would encourage students with different styles to use their natural inclinations to review papers of peers with different inclinations:

outliners can help free writers check their organization;

students who tend to details can point out the need for them;

students who like facts can show where they are needed to support generalizations;

students who know how to limit can show others where to cut;

students who focus on interesting the audience can suggest ways to do this;

students who need clarity can insist on it.

Peer response questionnaires designed to focus on these differences encourage students with complementary composing styles to use their different styles to approach the same piece of writing from different directions. Hopefully, this working together will not only produce better papers, but will also encourage the students to adopt some aspects of the complementary style and thus develop more flexible styles themselves.

This semester, I have students in groups of 3: 1 pivotal member with a peer whose pattern is similar to hers

and 1 whose pattern is complementary. At present I am asking the pivotal student to keep a record to determine which peer is more helpful to her in revising. I will also interview each pivotal student at the end of the semester to determine which peer has been most helpful in both collaborative writing and in revising.

SHOW PEER RESPONSE QUESTIONNARIE

Charles Cooper, when interviewed by Betty Cain for The Writing Instructor (Spring 1984, p. 110) said we must train the ssudents to assess writing critically. He specifies "where to look, how to respond, how to look for connections or relationships, how to think about what's missing, and what's there that shouldn't be." I maintain this may be easier for students with different composing styles. And grouping students with complementary styles may be one way of increasing the usefulness of peer responses.

Students with complementary composing styles can share with students who have different natural tendencies in their approaches to writing and revision.

A student who strives for expression and continuity of main ideas in his own writing is likely to notice its absence from someone else's paper.

A student who is very particular about getting the details into his own paper is likely to miss them when his peer fails to put them in.

Name_____

Did you need to
change your title?

introduction?

conclusion?

sharpen your thesis?

change main ideas?

reorder main ideas?

add main ideas?

delete main ideas?

add paragraphs?

delete pargraphs?

change order of
paprgraphs?

add details?

examples?

experiences?

add personal examples?

delete details,
examples, illustrations?

add interest?

clarify?

add transitions?

sharpen wording?

choose more appropriate words?_____

correct spelling?_____

correct punctuation?_____

finish?_____

A student who tends meticulously to mechanics is likely to spot errors in a peer's writing.

In the future we will need to

Define the various characteristics of composing styles more finely;

Determine correlations between difference characteristics;

Determine whether complements help each other more than likes;

Determine whether students make more signigicant changes when working with a complementary peer than when working with a like peer.

Perfect test items.